

Environmental Justice Listening Sessions in Pueblo, Colorado

On May 11, Carol Rushin, assisted by the Region's Environmental Justice Team, held two listening sessions in Pueblo, Colorado.

The first of these sessions was held in a living room in the Salt Creek community. This meeting was designed to solicit information about environmental and environmental health concerns from residents of Pueblo's EJ communities. Six neighbors met with Carol and shared their frustrations in making themselves heard by state and local decision makers. These neighbor's concerns ranged from mercury emissions from the nearby steel mill and power plant to the intrusion of methane in drinking water wells, due to coal bed methane extraction activities.

The second Listening Session brought together more than twenty environmental leaders from across Southern Colorado. This group shared a broad policy perspective regarding the challenging environmental issues facing their region. For more than three hours, Carol listened and learned what problems were believed to be both immediate and urgent. Major focus was directed to the issue of the seeming imbalance of power between environmentally concerned citizens and those who own and operate permitted facilities. A number of those attending believe that regulators are not aggressive enough in exercising their permitting and enforcement duties. The specific issues of, mercury, radon, radiation and watershed management were addressed.

The Region will prepare an Action Plan to address those issues where EPA might work to good effect on behalf of the community.

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